

Stiff penalties welcomed

Monday, January 03, 2005 10:05 AM

Last week at the Honolulu Police Department headquarters, the governor issued her legislative proposals “to enhance traffic safety (and) save lives.”

Also on hand were Lt. Gov. James “Duke” Aiona, Department of Transportation Director Rod Haraga, lawmakers, prosecutors, representatives of MADD Hawaii and other safety advocates.

The proposals include making it more difficult for teenagers to acquire driver’s licenses and restricting driving privileges. The three-step driver licensing process is similar to a bill introduced last session by Reps. Joe Souki of Maui and Kirk Caldwell of Honolulu.

The proposals include hiking the penalties for speeding – a long overdue step – to thwarting those drivers who endanger pedestrians, schoolchildren, roadway construction workers and everyone else on the road. Under the governor’s proposal, anyone driving faster than 20 mph in a school zone would face a \$540 fine, double the current amount.

The provision of the law that should be of most interest to oblivious drivers is a provision aimed at “excessive speeding.” Anyone convicted of driving more than 25 mph over the speed limit (that’s 45 mph in a 20-mph zone and 75 mph in a 45-mph zone) or driving more than 80 mph would face a fine of \$1,000, a 30-day suspension of license, mandatory attendance in a driver-retraining course, and 36 hours of community service or jail time of between two to five days.

That’s for the first offense. The more offenses, the stiffer the penalties.

Gov. Lingle said her proposals are “common sense” approaches. They certainly seem so, providing speeders are brought to justice and providing the state supplies the funds needed for counties to set up and operate driver-retraining courses.

There is no reason to speed on Maui, and if the governor’s proposals pass the Legislature, there would be even more reason to drive safely and sensibly.

Copyright © 2004 **The Maui News**.